

CLAIMS

1. A method of operating a mobile communication device during an emergency situation, comprising:

5 receiving at the mobile communication device from a communication system an emergency message;

transitioning the mobile communication device from a regular mode of operation to an emergency mode of operation in response to receiving the emergency message; and

10 allowing only a status message to be transmitted from the mobile communication device while in the emergency mode of operation.

2. A method of operating a mobile communication device as defined in claim 1, further comprising alerting a user of the mobile communication device in response to receiving the emergency message.

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3. A method of operating a mobile communication device as defined in claim 2, wherein alerting the user comprises providing a visual alert.

20 4. A method of operating a mobile communication device as defined in claim 3, wherein providing a visual alert comprises illuminating a status response button of the mobile communication device.

25 5. A method of operating a mobile communication device as defined in claim 3, wherein providing a visual alert comprises displaying an icon on a display of the mobile communication device.

6. A method of operating a mobile communication device as defined in claim 2, wherein alerting the user comprises providing an audible alert.

5 7. A method of operating a mobile communication device as defined in claim 2, wherein alerting the user comprises providing an tactile alert.

8. A method of operating a mobile communication device as defined in claim 2, wherein providing the tactile alert comprises actuating a mechanical vibrator
10 of the mobile communication device.

9. A method of operating a mobile communication device as defined in claim 1, wherein receiving the emergency message comprises receiving the emergency message in a broadcast control channel transmitted by the
15 communication system.

10. A method of operating a mobile communication device as defined in claim 1, wherein allowing only the status message to be transmitted comprises transmitting the status message in response to actuation of a status response button.
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11. A method of operating a mobile communication device as defined in claim 1, wherein allowing only the status message to be transmitted comprises transmitting the status message in a short message service message.

12. A method of operating a mobile communication device as defined in claim 1, wherein allowing only the status message to be transmitted comprises transmitting the status message to a remote party via the communication system.

- 5 13. A method of operating a mobile communication device as defined in claim 1, wherein allowing only the status message to be transmitted comprises transmitting the status message to a status update server of the communication system.

14. A method of operating a mobile communication system during an emergency situation, comprising:
- determining which of a plurality of serving cells of the mobile communication system are affected cells, the affected cells being serving cells
 - 5 affected by the emergency situation,
 - broadcasting in each of the affected cells an emergency notification message;
 - and
 - providing communication service to mobile communication devices which are either transmitting a status message or are known emergency responders, and
 - 10 denying communication service to all other mobile communication devices.

15. A method of operating a mobile communication system during an emergency situation, comprising:

5 receiving a channel request from a mobile communication device at a base station, the base station having been determined to be in an area affected by the emergency situation;

if the channel request indicates the mobile communication device intends to transmit a status message, granting the request, receiving the status message from the mobile communication device and forwarding the status message to a remote
10 party.

If the channel request indicates the mobile communication device is an emergency subscriber, granting the request and allowing the emergency subscriber to have normal communication service; and

ignoring the channel request if the channel request is not from an emergency
15 subscriber or for transmitting a status message.

16. A method of operating a mobile communication device of an emergency subscriber during an emergency situation, comprising:

transmitting a communication service request to a base station, the base station operating in an emergency mode, the communication service request

5 containing a subscriber identifier for identifying emergency subscriber;

receiving at the mobile communication device a channel assignment indicating an assigned channel to be used by the emergency subscriber; and

commencing communication on the assigned channel.

17. A method of operating a mobile communication system during an emergency situation, the mobile communication system having an emergency profile server, the method comprising:

- 5 receiving a status service request over a random access channel at a base station of the mobile communication system from a subscriber;
- retrieving an emergency profile corresponding to the subscriber, the emergency profile indicating at least one party to be contacted in the event of an emergency situation; and
- 10 transmitting a status message to the at least one party indicated in the emergency profile.